

A Study on the Origin of Stone Mound Tombs

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1. Introduction

Tombs from the Bronze Age in the Korean Peninsula particularly in its southern area are mainly stone coffin tombs and dolmens. Recent excavations found new elements such as stone mounds, round and square graveyard facilities or blocks, multi-staged tomb chambers and multi-layered cover stones, stone mounds in tomb chambers and the use of wood coffins. These tomb elements are very exotic and raise questions on their origins.

The Mongolian plains are scattered with stone mound tombs from the Bronze Age and the Hun Age. According to the results of surveys until now, these tombs include stone mounds, round or square graveyard facilities, burial facilities using stone coffins or wooden coffins and multi-staged tomb chamber, which are similar to Bronze Age tombs found in the Korean Peninsula. Thus, although the two areas are distant from each other geographically, it is considered meaningful to trace their mutual relation by comparing tombs from the Bronze Age in the Mongolian plains with those from the same age in the southern area of the Korean Peninsula.

2. Tombs in the Mongolian Plains

1) Bronze Age

A representative Bronze Age tomb system in Mongolia is Khirgisuur, which is called stone mound tomb, square tomb, stone mound for sacrificial rites, etc.

There is a round or square stone mound covering

the burial facility at the center and around the mound are graveyard facilities marking off the block. The height of stone mounds ranges from 1m to 2-3m. Sometimes there is a square projection from a side of a round stone mound, which is assumed to be a facility related to sacrificial rites or ceremonies. In the site of Tov aimag Moggon morit sum Ikh Khotol is a small-size tomb attached to the stone mound.

In the central part of the burial facility is usually a stone coffin. In general, there is a coffin in a stone mound but sometimes multiple tombs are found in a stone mound. The quantity of excavated remains is small in general, and earthenware pieces or animal bones are sometimes found around stone mounds or tombs. In many cases, a deer stone is erected at the entrance of or near stone mound tombs or at the center of stone mounds.

* Relevant sites and areas: The site of Tov aimag Moggon morit sum Ikh Khotol, the area of Khentii aimag Tsenkhermandal sum Ustyn denj, the area of Selenge aimag Darkhan city Sant, the area of Bulgan aimag Orkhon sum Orkhon, the area of Bulgan aimag Buregkhangai sum Zalaa tolgoi, the site of Overkhangai aimag Gochirus sum Ikh Dorolj, the site of Paaluu

2) Hun Age

The Huns emerged in the stage of history from the 3rd century B.C. and many tombs erected in the Hun Age are found in the Mongolian plains. Tombs from this age also used stones a lot but they are somewhat different from stone mound tombs. The stones are exposed over the ground but they are different from a mound piled up at a certain height. In addition, their

size is smaller than stone mound tombs. There are few cases that have graveyard facilities surrounding the tombs.

In the central part of the burial facility is usually a wooden coffin. First, a 2-3 staged tomb chamber was dug and a wooden coffin was placed in the chamber and again a wooden cover was placed over the coffin. Over the cover were also placed many layers of stone plates or stone splits, and the tomb chamber was surrounded by stone plates. The stone mound inside the stone plates was filled only up to the height of the stone plates. because a wooden cover was used, the stone mound inside sometimes fell in.

The site of Tov aimag Altanbulag sum Morin tolgoi had the structure of 'three-staged tomb chamber +wooden coffin+stone mound' and from the sill of the tomb chamber were found the bones of those buried alive or the bones of animals such as cows and dogs. There is a square projection from a side of the stone mound.

* Relevant sites and areas: The site of Tov aimag Altanbulag sum Morin tolgoi, the area of Bulgan aimag Buregkhangai sum Ikh dulaan, the area of Khentii aimag Tsenkhermandal sum Ustyn denj, the area of Khentii aimag Batshireet sum Uglugchingol

3. Comparison of characteristics of tombs in the two areas

- 1) Common points between Mongolian tombs from the Bronze Age and those from the Hun Age
 - a. Round or square shape
 - b. Square projection attached to round stone mounds (for sacrificial rite)
- 2) Characteristics of Mongolian tombs from the Bronze Age
 - c. Stone mound
 - d. Graveyard facilities marking off the block
 - e. Deer stone at the center of the stone mound
 - f. Small-sized tombs around
 - g. Multiple tombs in a stone mound
 - h. Stone coffin at the central part of the tomb (the tomb chamber is shallow)
 - i. A tomb itself is used as an altar for offering sacrifices (stone mound for sacrificial rites)
- 3) Characteristics of Mongolian tombs from the Hun Age
 - j. Flat stone mound or stone pave inside the tomb without a mound
 - k. Stone plate tomb surrounded by stone plates
 - l. Multi-staged tomb chamber and a stone mound inside the tomb chamber
 - m. Use wooden coffins
- 4) Comparison with tombs in the southern area of the Korean Peninsula
 - a. Shape: Bronze Age tombs with graveyard facilities are all square or round (Deokcheon-ri, Jindong-ri, Sogok-ri, Sanpo, Yulha B, Yeouigok, Jeopo E, Igeum-dong, Daepyeong-ri)
 - b. Square projection attached to round stone mounds: A square facility attached to a round tomb, which is considered to be related to ceremonies such as sacrificial rite (Jindong-ri, Yeouigok).
 - c. Mounds: It is obvious that the concept of mounds was introduced to Bronze Age tombs. Mounds were built with stones (Jindong-ri, Yulha B) or with earth (Deokcheon-ri).
 - d. Graveyard facilities: It is widely known that there were tombs called compartment tombs or Buseok-myo (Deokcheon-ri, Jindong-ri, Sogok-ri, Hoehyeon-ri, Sanpo, Yulha B, Yeouigok, Jeopo E, Igeum-dong, Daepyeong-ri, Wolseong-dong).
 - e. Headstone: A deer stone erected at the center of Mongolian stone mound tombs is considered to be a headstone. The upper stone in dolmens is also assumed to function as a headstone and particularly there are many cases that a stone was found like a headstone at the center of

- the tombs. No tomb was found in the site of Wolseong-dong, Daegu, a stone is erected at the center of the square block (Deokcheon-ri, Pyeongna-ri, Jindong-ri, Sogok-ri, Hoehyeon-ri, Sanpo, Yulha B, Yeouigok, Jeopo E, Igeum-dong, Dongchon-ri, Daepyeong-ri, Wolseong-dong).
- f. Small tombs: When there are small tombs around graveyard facilities in a block, the tombs are likely to belong to a large tomb (Deokcheon-ri, Jindong-ri, Hoehyeon-ri, Igeum-dong).
- g. Multiple tombs inside a stone mound: There are cases that a number of individual stone mounds form a larger stone mound. Tombs called 'Chimchon-ri Type' in the northern area of the Korean Peninsula is similar to this (Sangin-dong, Gain-ri, Dohang-ri).
- h. Central part (stone coffin): The central part of Bronze Age tombs is mostly a stone coffin or a stone chamber. This is found in most remains.
- i. Tomb as an altar: A tomb itself is commonly considered to be related to sacrificial rites or ceremonies. Even Mongolian Khirgisuur is translated into a stone mound for sacrificial rites. This is the case in the Korean Peninsula too. There are tombs or facilities called 'an altar dolmen.' because a tomb itself is a ceremonial symbol the relevancy between the two is natural.
- j. Flat stone mound or stone pave inside the tomb: In case there are square or round graveyard facilities, stones are usually paved around the tombs. This sometimes includes the stone mound over the cover stone. In this case the mound would not be exposed above the ground (Pyeongna-ri, Jindong-ri, Sogok-ri, Sanpo, Yeouigok, Jeopo E, Dohang-ri, Igeum-dong, Daepyeong-ri).
- k. Stone plate tomb: This is similar to a compartment tomb with graveyard facilities. However, like tombs from the Hun Age, tombs of multi-staged earthen chamber surrounded with stone plates are distinguishable (Pyeongna-ri, Sogok-ri).
- l. Multi-staged tomb chamber and stone mound inside the chamber: Several cases of tombs were found in recent surveys that have a 2-3 staged tomb chamber and multiple layers of cover stones or a stone mound inside the chamber. The central part of the tomb is very deep from the surface (Deokcheon-ri, Hoehyeon-ri, Yulha B, Dohang-ri, Sangnam-dong, Dongchon-ri, Nae-dong, Oe-dong, Soto-ri).
- m. Wooden coffin: The central part of dolmens is a stone coffin or a stone chamber. However, in some cases, evidence of a wooden coffin is found inside the stone chamber. Even in some remains, it looks highly possible that the central part itself was a wooden coffin. (Deokcheon-ri, aegok-ri, Yulha B, Sangnam-dong, Nae-dong).
- * Relevant sites: Changwon Deokcheon-ri, Hwasun Daegok-ri, Boryeong Pyeongna-ri, Changwon Jindong-ri, Sacheon Sogok-ri, Gimhae Hoehyeon-ri, Daegu Sangin-dong, Geochang Sanpo, Gimhae Yulha B, Jinan Yeouigok, Miryang Gain-ri, Hapcheon Jeopo E, Haman Dohang-ri, Changwon Sangnam-dong, Sacheon Igeum-dong, Boseong Dongchon-ri, Jinju Daepyeong-ri, Daegu Wolseong-dong, Gimhae Nae-dong, Changwon Oe-dong, Yangsan Soto-ri

4. Research tasks

As presented above, we compared Mongolian tombs from the Bronze Age and the Hun Age with those from the Bronze Age in the Korean Peninsula. Because the two regions have different natural environment, the location of sites and the materials of tombs cannot be the same. Differences in social structure and industrial activities should also be taken into account. The long distance between the two region would be an obstacle to the propagation of culture. Nevertheless, Bronze Age tombs in the Korean Peninsula contain many elements dis-

tinguished from tombs in the previous ages. This suggests that culture was imported from other areas. Because they are from similar ages, tombs found in the two regions show many common points and similarities. This the high possibility that Bronze Age tombs in Mongolia were closely related to those in the Korean Peninsula. More detailed examination is required in future researches.

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